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KHPA BOARD APPROVES HEALTH REFORM RECOMMENDATIONS; ELECTS NEW OFFICERS

The Kansas Health Policy Authority Board today approved the agency's health reform recommendations for the 2009 legislative session. The Board, which met in July and August to lay the groundwork for the upcoming session, prioritized several of the same reforms that were recommended to last year's legislature.

The priorities identified by the KHPA Board include:

First, enacting a statewide indoor smoking ban in public places that will allow Kansans to work and gather without exposure to deadly secondhand smoke and instituting an increase in the tobacco user fee to decrease tobacco-related illness and death. The Board emphasized that dollars generated by a tobacco user fee should be used to fund the remaining health care initiatives, such as expanding access to health care for needy parents and caretakers who earn up to the federal poverty level (\$ 1,467 per month for a family of 3), improving access to affordable health insurance for small businesses and young adults, and expanding early detection for breast, cervical, colorectal and prostate cancer to prevent illness and death from failure to timely detect those diseases.

As new KHPA Board Chair Joe Tilghman observed, "If passed by the legislature, the recommendations approved by the KHPA Board will make a substantial positive impact on the health and well-being of Kansans. We encourage Kansans to keep the issue of health reform high on the radar screen of policymakers. It is only through our collective efforts that we will make progress on this important issue."

The Board also confirmed the finalized budget they had approved at the August Board meeting and elected new KHPA Board officers. Joe Tilghman was elected KHPA Board Chair, Susan Page was elected Board Vice-Chair, and Arneatha Martin was elected Board Secretary.

The agency also announced today that Kansas Public Radio journalist Peter Hancock has been hired as the agency's Director of Public Relations and will serve as KHPA's Public Information Officer. Frances Breyne will remain Director of Communications for the KHPA, managing agency, community, and stakeholder relations. Five area health foundations have given KHPA a grant for the purpose of stakeholder outreach.

For more information about Kansas Health Reform, please visit the KHPA website at:
<http://www.khpa.ks.gov/AuthorityBoard/PreviousMeetingInformation.html>

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